AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 - 32 (Canceled).

33. (Currently Amended) A method for enabling players in a ~~massively~~ multiplayer game to communicate with each other in a peer-to-peer ~~relationship~~network connection, in which communications of the peer-to-peer network connection bypass the game server hosting the multiplayer game, and so as to ~~substantially~~ reduce a workload of ~~a game server that hosts the massively~~ the game server hosting the multiplayer game, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

(a) requiring each person ~~who wants to participate as a player in playing~~ requesting to play in the ~~massively~~ multiplayer game to first enroll in a game service operating the game server;

(b) authenticating each player attempting to play in ~~access~~ the multiplayer game ~~server~~ by determining if ~~the~~ each corresponding player is enrolled in the game service, so that only persons who have enrolled in the game service are allowed to access the multiplayer game ~~server~~ as a player;

(c) providing a first player that is authenticated and that has accessed the multiplayer game a list identifying at least one other player that is authenticated and that is enabled to communicate with the first player in a peer-to-peer network connection~~who can interact with the first player in the massively multiplayer game that is hosted by the game server~~; and

(d) enabling the first player to select a second player from the list in a request from the first player for communication information corresponding to the second player and that is required to establish the peer-to-peer connection between the first player and the second player and that includes at least an IP address of the second player~~, the second player who has been selected being indicated to the game server~~; and

(e) in response to the request, transmitting the communication information comprising at least the IP address corresponding to the second ~~about the second~~ player from the game server to the first player~~, the information being required for enabling a~~

~~peer-to-peer communication to be established between the first player and the second player~~, wherein the first player, upon receiving the communication information, uses the received communication information to attempt to open a peer-to-peer communication with the second player.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 33, wherein ~~the step of~~ authenticating each player attempting to access the ~~game server~~multiplayer game comprises ~~the step of~~ assigning each player a unique user key, and ~~the step of~~ wherein transmitting information about the second player from the server to the first player comprises ~~the step of~~ transmitting the second player's unique user key to the first player, which is used by the first player in the attempt to open the peer-to-peer connection with the second player, thereby assuring the second player that the first player's attempt ~~request~~ to open the peer-to-peer communication comes from a trusted player participating in the ~~massively~~-multiplayer game hosted by the game server.

35. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 33, wherein if after receiving the communication information about the second player, the first player is unsuccessful in the attempt ~~unable~~ to establish the peer-to-peer communication with the second player, the method further comprises~~comprising the steps of~~:

(a) notifying the game server that the attempt by the first player to establish the peer-to-peer communication has failed;

(b) transmitting information about the first player from the game server to the second player, the information being required for enabling ~~a~~ the peer-to-peer communication to be established between the first player and the second player; and

(c) requesting the second player to establish ~~a~~ the peer-to-peer communication with the first player.

36. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 35, wherein if after receiving information about the first player, the second player is unable to establish the peer-to-peer communication with the first play, the method further comprises~~comprising the step of~~ routing each communication between the first player and the second player through the game server.

37. (Currently Amended) A ~~memory~~ computer readable storage media having ~~medium on which are~~ stored machine instructions for ~~carrying out the steps of Claim 33~~ implementing a method comprising:

(a) requiring each person requesting to play in the multiplayer game to first enroll in a game service operating the game server;

(b) authenticating each player attempting to play in the multiplayer game by determining if each corresponding player is enrolled in the game service, so that only persons who have enrolled in the game service are allowed to access the multiplayer game as a player;

(c) providing a first player that is authenticated and that has accessed the multiplayer game a list identifying at least one other player that is authenticated and that is enabled to communicate with the first player in a peer-to-peer network connection; and

(d) enabling the first player to select a second player from the list in a request from the first player for communication information corresponding to the second player and that is required to establish the peer-to-peer connection between the first player and the second player and that includes at least an IP address of the second player; and

(e) in response to the request, transmitting the communication information comprising at least the IP address corresponding to the second player from the game server to the first player, wherein the first player, upon receiving the communication information, uses the received communication information to attempt to open a peer-to-peer communication with the second player.

38. (Currently Amended) A networked game system for providing a gaming environment in which only authorized players are permitted to establish peer-to-peer communication with other authorized players during game play, thereby enhancing game play without requiring resources from the networked game system to manage ongoing communication between players, comprising:

~~(a)~~ a processor; and

~~(b)~~ a memory in communication with the processor, said memory storing machine instructions that cause the processor to implement a method comprising:

(a) requiring each person requesting to play in the multiplayer game to first enroll in a game service operating the game server;

(b) authenticating each player attempting to play in the multiplayer game by determining if each corresponding player is enrolled in the game service, so that only persons who have enrolled in the game service are allowed to access the multiplayer game as a player;

(c) providing a first player that is authenticated and that has accessed the multiplayer game a list identifying at least one other player that is authenticated and that is enabled to communicate with the first player in a peer-to-peer network connection; and

(d) enabling the first player to select a second player from the list in a request from the first player for communication information corresponding to the second player and that is required to establish the peer-to-peer connection between the first player and the second player and that includes at least an IP address of the second player; and

(e) in response to the request, transmitting the communication information comprising at least the IP address corresponding to the second player from the game server to the first player, wherein the first player, upon receiving the communication information, uses the received communication information to attempt to open a peer-to-peer communication with the second player.

~~carry out a plurality of functions, including:~~

~~(i) screening each player attempting to access the gaming environment hosted by the game system, so that only authorized players are allowed access to the gaming environment hosted by the game system;~~

~~(ii) providing a first authorized player with a list including at least one other authorized player participating in the gaming environment; and~~

~~(iii) enabling the first authorized player to identify a second authorized player from the list;~~

~~(iv) transmitting information about the second authorized player from the game system to the first authorized player, the information including any address required to enable the peer-to-peer communication to be established between the first authorized player and the second authorized player.~~

39. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 38, wherein the information includes a unique user key that is assigned to the second authorized player by the game system, and which is used by the first player in the attempt to open the peer-to-peer connection with the second player, thereby assuring the second authorized player that the first player's request to open the peer-to-peer communication comes from a trusted player.

40. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 38, wherein the machine instructions further cause the processor to carry out the functions of:

(a) ~~if notified that~~upon receiving a notification that an attempt by the first authorized player to establish the peer-to-peer communication with the second authorized player has failed, providing the second authorized player with information about the first authorized player, the information including any address required to enable the peer-to-peer communication to be established between the first authorized player and the second authorized player; and

(b) requesting the second authorized player to establish the peer- to-peer communication with the first authorized player.

41 - 43 (Canceled).

44. (New) A method as recited in claim 33, wherein the list is limited to players on a same team.

45. (New) A method as recited in claim 33, wherein the list is limited to players playing a game within a same game world and within a predetermined proximity within the game world.

46. (New) A method as recited in claim 33, the communication information includes a specific port address.

47. (New) A method as recited in claim 33, the IP address comprises an internal IP address associated with a shared Internet connection.